

SPEAKING NOTES
FOR
Mr. Omar Sweeney
Managing Director of the
Jamaica Social Investment Fund
At the
Official Handing over Ceremony
for
Hurricane Beryl Recovery Project &
Women and Youth Phase 2
On
Thursday, June 12, 2025.

Master of Ceremonies, Ms. Fae Ellington,

Honourable Floyd Green - Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries & Mining,

Honourable Franklin Witter - Minister of State, Agriculture, Fisheries & Mining,

Mr. Everald Warmington - Member of Parliament, St. Catherine Southwestern,

Mr. Dermon Spence – Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Mining,

Honourable Icylin Golding, CD Custos Rotulorum of St. Catherine,
Mr. Garnet Edmondson – Acting Chief Executive Officer, Rural Agricultural Development Agency,

Dr. Gavin Bellamy - Chief Executive Officer, National Fisheries Authority,

Mr. Andre Lindsay, General Manager, Jamaica Bauxite Institute,
Mr. Peter Thompson – Executive Director, Jamaica 4H Clubs,

Mrs. Janet Conie - General Manager, Banana Board,

Other heads of agencies and divisions,

Members of the JSIF team,

Representatives from our farming and fishing communities,

and most importantly—the women, youth, and families whose futures we are here to safeguard.

Good morning. Today we formally hand over two recovery interventions, which were conceived under the Second Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI- II): the Income Generation for Women & Youth Project and the Hurricane Beryl Recovery Project.

As we are aware, Jamaica's agriculture and fisheries sectors stand on the frontline of climate shocks. The COVID-19 Pandemic exposed supply-chain fragilities, then Hurricane Beryl in July 2024 and Tropical Storm Rafael's record rainfalls deepened the strain—upending production, incomes, and food security in rural parishes. Faced with these compounding threats, we chose action over anxiety, resilience over retreat.

Guided by REDI II's core objective—enhancing market access and climate resilience for rural enterprises— the JSIF collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Mining and its agencies: RADA, the National Fisheries Authority, Jamaica 4-H Clubs, the Research & Development Division, Banana Board, Jamaica Bauxite Institute, and the Tourism Linkages Network. Their technical expertise shaped beneficiary selection, project design, and implementation at every step.

Stemming from these collaborations, the REDI-II Women and Youth Project was conceptualized, targeting groups hit hardest by pandemic-driven market volatility. This project jump-starts recovery, builds new income streams, and installs climate-smart practices that last. Under the first phase of the REDI-II Income Generation for Women & Youth approximately J\$129.3 million was invested and reached 4,500 rural producers, to include layer & broiler farmers, crop cultivators, apiculturists, backyard gardeners, and fisherfolks—providing inputs and equipment.

- A total of J\$101 million has so far been invested in the second phase of this project, which is currently underway: Under this phase, support has been extended to 1,100 additional beneficiaries; concentrating on broiler production, sanitation upgrades in pig farming, and enhanced fisheries operations.

As it relates to the Hurricane Beryl Recovery Component approximately J\$145.6 million has been earmarked specifically for agricultural enterprises that were damaged by the July 2024 storm. This intervention delivers:

- Agricultural inputs and equipment across crops, livestock, fisheries, and apiculture.
- Rehabilitation and construction of greenhouses on reclaimed bauxite lands—transforming idle acreage into productive, storm-resilient assets.

Approximately 750 farmers and fishers will receive direct assistance, restoring jobs and food production capacity in the hardest-hit zones.

Across both projects, a cumulative J\$375.9 million has been invested, and will positively impact 6,350 direct beneficiaries. Our goals are clear:

1. Revitalize rural incomes through expanded crop, livestock, and fisheries output.
2. Embed climate-smart technologies—from upgraded housing for livestock to water-efficient backyard gardens.

3. Monitor & evaluate continuously, ensuring transparency and proof of impact.

These outcomes translate into more food on local tables, stronger household finances, and a rural economy fit to withstand the next shock.

Today's handover is not an end—it is the start of collective stewardship:

- Beneficiaries: Use every input, tool, greenhouse, and support to its fullest. Pass on knowledge; protect the assets entrusted to you.
- Technical agencies: Keep mentoring, keep measuring, keep refining.
- Community leaders and private partners: Champion these success stories; help link producers to markets at home and abroad.

When we combine resources and resolve, we transform vulnerability into vitality.

Let this ceremony signal a new chapter—one where a broiler farmer in St Elizabeth, a greenhouse operator on reclaimed bauxite land in Manchester, and a young fisher in Hanover all share the same outlook: confidence in tomorrow.

Together, we are proving that targeted investment, resilient design, and inclusive planning can lift entire communities. May these interventions thrive, multiply, and inspire every rural enterprise across Jamaica.

Thank you, and congratulations to all who made this achievement possible.